



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Idahoans reminded to check logging slash piles for heat

(COEUR D'ALENE) – Piles of logging debris that were lit in the fall, winter, or spring may still be burning under the surface and present a wildfire risk because of the lack of snowpack this year. The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) is asking forest owners and logging operators to check piles burned since the fall for any heat to reduce the risk of a fire escaping.

The types of piles that may still be burning are ones created by dozers and excavators during logging operations. The piles, known as "machine piles," contain more dirt which does not allow oxygen into the woody material, causing the pile to burn slowly. Smaller piles of woody debris created by hand without the use of heavy equipment are not as much a concern for fire managers.

Any forested part of Idaho where logging operations have occurred and machine piles were lit since the fall are at risk of reigniting and escaping with the warmer weather.

Checking for heat with a shovel or other equipment may be required. Driving by may not be enough to check the pile because it may not be giving off smoke. If heat is found, the burning debris should be excavated and completely extinguished with water.

A healthy snowpack usually will put out machine piles; rain alone will not extinguish a dirty machine pile.

In addition to providing wildfire protection on 6.2 million acres of mostly state- and privately-owned forests in Idaho, IDL regulates the reduction of branches and tops of trees left after timber harvesting to ensure the material is removed or burned on-site as required under Idaho forest practices laws.

The State of Idaho – IDL and two timber protective associations – already have responded to more than 30 fires this year, a sure sign that fire season is here early. If a fire escapes a slash pile, the person or entity that conducted the logging operation may be liable to pay the cost of fire suppression.

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